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ABSTRACT

The "discovery and conquest" of the Internet and its application to the teaching of foreign languages and cultures has created some very serious pedagogical problems. The interest in instructional technology appeared on the horizon at a moment when theorists of foreign language acquisition were promoting notions of proficiency-oriented and interactive teaching for cross-cultural communication. The digital realms of the Internet, the World Wide Web, CD-ROM, and network-based communications should immerse students in task-driven cultural studies. This field of expansion has presented a dilemma to foreign language teachers, who have had to face the issue of proper contextualization of these activities. Digital technologies can promote a more student-focused environment only if the teacher examines what is happening in the classroom before the addition of the use of any of the computer technologies. The World Wide Web as properly applied in this effort provides quick and unrestricted access to authentic materials in the form of text, sound, and images. Topics addressed in this paper include: the role of instructional technology in the foreign language classroom; CD-ROM, the Web, and network-based communication technologies; and the importance of communication in the classroom. A compilation of Web sites useful in the foreign language classroom is included. (Author/MES)

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The Virtual Global Village: The World Wide Web, Instructional Technology and the "Communicative" Language Classroom

ED 430 527

J. Blake, Ph.D.

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Abstract

The "discovery and conquest" of the Internet and its application to the teaching of foreign languages and cultures has created some very serious pedagogical problems. The interest in Instructional Technology appeared on the horizon at a moment when theorists of foreign language acquisition were promoting notions of "proficiency-oriented" and "interactive" teaching for cross-cultural communication. The digital realms of the Internet, the WWW, CD-ROM, and Network-based communications should immerse students in "task-driven" cultural studies. This field of expansion has presented a dilemma to foreign language teachers, who have had to face the issue of proper contextualization of these activities. Digital technologies can promote a more student-focused environment only if the teacher examines what is happening in the classroom before the addition of the use of any of the computer technologies. The World Wide Web as properly applied in this effort provides quick and unrestricted access to authentic materials, in the form of text, sound and images.

The Role of Instructional Technology in the "Communicative" Foreign Language Classroom

When the word "technology" is mentioned along with language teaching, teachers often feel intimidated, imagining that perhaps their employment is somehow threatened and that being replaced by computer-assisted reaming looms on the horizon. No doubt some administrators may have this in mind when they fund pilot programs which have a technological basis, yet, teachers should not fear, since language is a social phenomenon and as such will always need to be taught with the social dimension only made possible by meaningful personal interaction in the classroom. The real presence of teacher and students in the classroom setting cannot be replaced by technology, but the language teacher who does not utilize technology in the classroom will, in all likelihood, be replaced by the language teacher who does.

The best way for a student to learn a language has always been to travel abroad for a "total immersion" experience, which should be structured. Yet, since most students are unable to do this, technology can play a critical support role. Technology can serve to increase the learner's contact through a wide variety of authentic materials within the traditional framework. Foreign countries and their cultures can co-exist with the learner in the virtual, or electronic, classroom. Far from eliminating the role of the teacher, the

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electronic classroom presents a challenge to determine how the teacher can inform learners of what works or what does not work in the electronic classroom.

As we refer to this electronic classroom, there are three areas which we need to examine and define: **CD-ROM, the World Wide Web, and Network-based communication.**

CD-ROM: In the future most beginning and intermediate level foreign language textbooks will be marketed by publishing houses with an accompanying CD-ROM program, which is usually promoted as being "interactive". The classification and definition of "interactive" differ widely, but there is no denying that publishing houses have moved in this direction, as, among other reasons, this packaging has become attractive to teachers and students. And there is no denying that the multi-media approach to foreign language learning does sell textbooks. But there will be questions which remain regarding how to evaluate the quality of each textbook - CD-ROM package and how to integrate those activities into what should already be going on in the classroom in terms of communicative teaching.

World Wide Web: The availability of foreign language materials on the World Wide Web has increased dramatically in the last two years. It is the ultimate source of authentic materials in the target language. Through an Internet browser, such as Netscape, students can access authentic reading materials from Paris, Madrid, or other place where the language is spoken. Despite the increase in the number of Web site, teachers have few guidelines on how to be selective of pertinent materials at the Web site or how to incorporate these electronic materials into the curriculum systematically. The examination of how this is best accomplished for application with existing texts should be a top priority for foreign language educators. Students should be encouraged and guided carefully as they work with these Web materials at home or in the lab, by answering questions and performing tasks on-line, the results of which may be emailed to their instructor's e-mail account. Featuring Java script and CGI script enhancements can make these materials locally interactive. The present writer has set up a Web-page at http://www.geocities.comlParis/LeRBank/4484, at which he has his students visit and log in to accomplish certain assignments. Hyperlinks can be established to other pertinent Web sites which students are assigned to visit and perform specific tasks. Any assignments given on the World Wide Web must be "task driven, with the instructor supplying specific goals and objectives with care and attention given to effective integration of Web-based materials and researches into the existing curriculum. Students must be able to observe a correlation between what they are assigned to perform on the World Wide Web and what they are doing in the classroom.

In the future Web-based sections at the end of every chapter or unit of study in foreign language textbooks will become the norm. But as authors turn their attention to this area, teachers must be careful to choose sites for their stability and technical reliability. Fortunately, there are many governmental and commercial sponsors which are producing informative Web pages about their respective cultures and peoples.

Network-based Communication: Writing and reading are two activities which can be well-supported by the Internet environment. Teachers and students routinely use e-mail to communicate in the target language with each other. Other useful network tools include IRC chat, Use-net groups, listservs or MOOs (multi-user domain object-oriented), or Cyber-cafes. Distance learning RTA, or remote technical assistance, enables students and instructor to carry out collaborative learning over the Internet from remote locations.

All these Intemet tools enable the students to increase their use of the target language to. negotiate meaning, free from the constraints of meaning imposed by the time usually invested in the traditional classroom delivery mode. Foreign language professionals should be pioneering the use of these technologically-based tools in order to show the students how technology can enrich the curriculum.

We all have the responsibility for incorporating technology into our curriculum; not to take advantage of the emerging technologies is to abdicate our role as educational leaders. The use of technology makes the role of the teacher more, rather than less, important; technology will certainly never replace the role of the teacher.

However, before we in foreign languages become too distracted with the potential applications of technology in our classrooms and language laboratories, we should consider whether we are already teaching how to communicate in the classroom, and- if we are, how it would affect the use of technology. All language instruction should be properly task-driven; the classroom should be input-rich, and-information-exchange tasks should form the unit of instruction. This would mean that language learners work together to solve a problem, answer a question and use communication as a means to an end.

Yet, when we begin to assess the extent to which we have true communicative language teaching at all levels of instruction, it becomes clear that we are far from being a communicative nation. Even now, the vast majority of curricula seem to be grammar-driven, and tests, likewise, follow suit. In curricula such as these, communication would seem to be an add-on or serves to practice the grammar, which does not exist at the service of communication, as it well should.

Before language departments begin to invest in technology, faculty should reflect upon whether our classrooms are as they should be; technology should not drive the curriculum, but rather, the curriculum should drive the technology. The multi-media lab cannot substitute for what should be happening already in the classroom, and the extent to which technology can be used in language teaching depends on how language classes are already being conducted. Information tasks, interviews, and construction of information should be the focus of classrooms in which one day does not go by when students do not divide up in small groups to use language for some meaningful purpose.

In the grammar-based and grammar-testing classroom scenarios, technology could be utilized to supplant most, if not all, class time, and this would constitute an attractive situation for budget-constrained administrators. In higher-interactive and task-based communicative classrooms, technology can only serve as a supplement. For the task-based and communicatively-driven classroom environment, the proper application of technology is the challenge facing the instructor. If it is the consensus that grammar structuring does not lead to communication, it can be asserted that the outcome of communication-based curricula can be enhanced by appropriate supplemental activities that have a focus on processing grammatical form. Processing instruction as properly utilized is distinguished by an input-based and meaning-driven focus on grammatical form and structure. In a multi-media language lab environment students can benefit from carefully designed processing instruction which incorporates visual, oral and textual stimuli into its design.

Together with grammatical structure, processing instruction in a multimedia environment can assist in the development of the reamer's pragmatic abilities, or the learner's ability to study speakers' intentions and how those intentions are interpreted by the hearer. In second language cross-cultural pragmatics, there is evidence that many communication difficulties arise because second language learners either use inappropriate pragmatic devices when speaking or misinterpret native speakers' pragmatic devices. Given appropriate visual input in the multi-media lab, students can develop an awareness of pragmatic communication as they are delivered that visual input, which they observe intuitively.

Technology in any form can only serve the already existing communication-based classroom, not create it. The first order of business is to examine the way we conduct our classrooms, asking ourselves whether they have indeed reached their communicative potential. Only then should we turn our attention to issues of software, the World Wide Web and balancing the new technologies. In a task-based classroom a task cannot happen the same way electronically that it can in the traditional classroom.

A network-based classroom challenges students to set up a series of tasks which they can accomplish outside of the classroom; students return to the classroom to report their activities, so what is being accomplished is the enhancement of communicative activities targeted for the classroom, but at the students' own convenience. Properly integrated, technology and communicative activities include content which is important cognitively, culturally and personally to the learners. Communicative learning does not base itself or depend upon the technology itself, but rather is facilitated by it.

Language teachers should not aspire to use technology for the sake of using technology; there must be an improvement over what we are already doing. Technology should be used to bring authentic culture

content to the foreign language learner. In terms of curriculum design it is difficult to address whether a technology-based approach is more effective than a traditional approach, if classroom time is substituted with computer-based time, because when an additional component is added to an existing curriculum, there is additional input; it is then difficult to discern whether the net effect is due to more exposure or to the actual impact which a given technological medium might have on language development.

There is indeed a close fit between the structures and processes of the World Wide Web and some of the main structures and processes of university education. Launching students to WWW assignments can act as a powerful reinforcement of many forms of teaching and learning; Students are provided access to authentic materials which are not conveniently obtained through traditional means. The WWW also facilitates the invention of unusually rich course materials through hypertext links to relevant reference materials, which, when creatively appropriated through task-driven assignments, can be unusually engaging and demanding. The Internet also dramatically enhances the process of daily exchange of ideas between students and faculty because it creates a wide array of electronic forums for what has been called "conversational" learning. While the Internet will never serve as a substitute for sustained human contact, it does significantly extend the scope of certain forms of interaction. Moreover, the Internet allows the students to be more active agents in the learning process, further reinforcing the idea which should already be in place in the classroom: namely, that the student assumes the role of active learner and is not just a passive recipient of knowledge from the instructor and the texts. The Internet has the power to reinforce what is already embraced as communicative teaching and learning in the classroom; but the intriguing potential of the new technologies must not be allowed to drive us toward innovations that serve to erode rather than reinforce sound foreign language curriculum content.

Teaching with the World Wide Web: A Compilation of Web Sites Useful in the Foreign Language Classroom

Orientation to the Internet

http://www.december.com/web/texVindex.ht ml

General guide for the novice; gives basic information through many Hyperlinks for getting started exploring, browsing and connecting with people.

Pedagogy

http://k12. cnid r.org :90/resource.cntnts. html

Excellent site for addressing the proper application of the World Wide Web in the K12 classroom, creation of Web pages for class use, and online discussion groups.

http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/lss/lang/teach.html/#llc

Presents an assortment of ideas for using WWW resources as a teaching tool, as well as links to sites on pedagogy. Includes specific lesson plan suggestions, such as "City Net", "Metro Link", and "World News Tonight". Links to language-specific activities for French, Spanish and German.

http://www. utsa.edu/aetf/twiafaq. html

AATF list of Hyperlinks addressing frequently asked questions about teaching with the Internet. Deals with such issues as finding good ideas for using Internet activities in class, where to find technical information about Internet and French vocabulary for technical Internet terms, where to find cultural resources, and ideas for correspondence scolaire and other online exchange programs.

http://www.classroom.net

Classroom Connect Newsletter. Wriffen to aid teachers (K12) find and use Internet resources in the classroom. Suggestions for online activities, keypal addresses and lesson plans.

http://web66.coled.umn.edu/

Helps direct teachers (K12) as they plan purposeful Internet projects, with attention to motivation, assessment and outcomes.

http://agoralang.com/agora/agoranews current.html

The Agora Newsletter contains useful infommation dealing with cyberspace issues and application in the foreign language classroom.

http://vww.fln.vcu.edu/samples/forms.ht ml

This site provide examples of using the WWW and HTML "Forms" for instruction through Hyperlinks.

http://members.aol.com 'maestro1 2/web/writing.html

Instructions on how to write activities for the Web. Includes links to search engines and sites that link.

http://fromnowon.org

An on-line educational technology journal maintained by Jamie McKenzie, an educator who regularly updates the offerings here and provides much insightful commentary regarding the proper application instructional technology in the classroom.

Foreign Language/Culture Specific Resources

http :llwww. itp. berkeley.edu/-thorne/H u manResou rces.html

This is a resource list which, although not comprehensive, does give excellent starting points for exploring foreign language/culture specific topics. Covers many languages, including French, Spanish and German.

http://www.forlang .utoledo.ed u/BOOKMARK/BookmarkFRN.html

Excellent assortment of cultural, geographical and language specific sites.

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/langc/welcome.html

Includes the Virtual CALL Library, with language software to download and language resources through many links from the Language Centre at the University of Sussex.

http://www.iat.unc.edu/guides/irg-29.html

Selected sites of French language resources on the Internet.

http://www.utm.edu/departments/french/french.html#finding

Contains a wide range of French curriculum Hyperlinks.

http://www.iat.unc.edu/guideslirg-08.html

Provides links to resource pages, curriculum planning ideas and class activities for creative teaching methods in French.

http://www.uji.es/spain_www.html

Search engine plus interesting tourism and cultural information on Spain.

http://www.allison.clark.neVpub/lschank/web/foreign.html

Provides a wide array of links to foreign language and culture sights, with some emphasis on German.

http://www.imaginet.fr/momes/

Widely diverse site directed to children, but of interest and application to all ages; this site is an excellent example of how productive an educational experience that a Web site can be.

Integration of E-Mail and "Chat Groups" in the Classroom

http://www. stolaf. edu/network/iecc/discussion/classroom. html

Provides discussion of projects and interactions possible by e-mail between classrooms, centering around specific projects.

http://www.itp.berkeley e